Southern Gold Society
FOUNDED 2001
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Newsletter

Anne Amerson and the Dahlonega Mint Door Knocker

By David Crenshaw

In the rolling hills of Northeast Georgia, where gold once sparked dreams and history runs deep, a brass door knocker from the Dahlonega Mint found its way back to the public eye. Its journey, spanning over a century, is a tale of fire, family, and fortuitous connections. With the new Mint display recently opened at the University of Georgia, we should honor the woman whose passion for her hometown's past brought this artifact's story again to light. Her name was Elizabeth “Anne” Dismukes Amerson, and this is her story.

Anne Amerson was no stranger to Lumpkin County. Born and raised in its embrace, she walked the same streets where miners once chased fortunes in the 1830s gold rush. After graduating from North Georgia College, she married her college sweetheart, Hinton S. “Amos” Amerson. Their life together took them across the world during his 24-year career in the US Army, but in 1979, they returned to Dahlonega, the place that held Anne’s heart. It was here, in the shadow of the old courthouse square, that she began to weave the threads of her community’s history into stories that would captivate readers and preserve legacies.

Anne had a gift for listening. She sat with elders, collected their memories, and transformed those oral histories into vivid accounts of Northeast Georgia’s past. Starting in 1989, her column in *The Dahlonega Nugget,* “I Remember Dahlonega,” painted pictures of a bygone era. She went on to pen a dozen books and over 60 articles for the *North Georgia Journal* and its successor, *Georgia Backroads*. Her work earned her accolades: the Madeleine K. Anthony Award for historic preservation, the title of Outstanding Citizen, and induction into the University of North Georgia’s Hall of Fame. But for Anne, the real reward was sharing the soul of Dahlonega with the world.

As a charter member of the Lumpkin County Historical Society and the Friends of the Dahlonega Gold Museum, Anne was a fixture in her community. She volunteered as a docent at the Gold Museum, led walking tours of the square,

and spoke to local clubs with infectious enthusiasm for history. It was this deep connection to Dahlonega's heritage that allowed her to recognize the significance of an old family heirloom in the late 1990s.

The Dahlonega Mint, operational from 1838 to 1861, was a cornerstone of the town's identity. Its gold coins, struck from local ore, are still prized by collectors. But the mint's building itself met a tragic end, consumed by fire in 1878 while serving as the North Georgia Agricultural College. Few relics survived the blaze. Among them, unbeknown to most, was a brass door knocker adorned with the Great Seal of the United States—an eagle clutching arrows and an olive branch. This knocker had hung on the mint's front door since its opening, touched by the hands of its first superintendent, Dr. Joseph J. Singleton.

After the mint closed in 1861, the knocker traveled a mysterious path. It was initially assumed that federal officials removed it when they dismantled the mint's equipment at the Civil War's end. At some point it resurfaced at the New Orleans Mint, where it served its function until that facility shuttered in 1909. However, the timeline remains uncertain. Some historians believe the knocker may have remained at the Dahlonega site until the 1878 fire, possibly falling off during the collapse and salvaged from the ruins afterward. The recessed back of the knocker retains visible soot, strongly suggesting exposure to that fire and supporting the theory that it was not removed until after the blaze.

The New Orleans superintendent, Hugh S. Suthon, claimed it as a keepsake. Years later, during a visit to his physician in Gadsden, Alabama, Suthon learned the doctor's wife was Singleton's great-granddaughter. Moved by the connection, he gifted the knocker to Susan Singleton Bass, insisting it belonged with the family in Georgia.

The knocker passed through the generations from Susan Bass to her daughter, Francina Bass Perrott, and finally to Francina's daughter, Susan Perrott King. It adorned the door of their home in Columbus, Georgia, polished to a shine by the younger Susan's hands. By 1998, when the Singleton descendants gathered for a reunion in Dahlonega, the knocker was a cherished heirloom, its history whispered about among family members.

Enter Anne Amerson. Through her tireless work with the Gold Museum and historical society, Anne had become a hub for local lore. When the Singleton family arrived in Dahlonega, they brought the knocker to share its story. Anne, with her keen historian's eye, understood its significance. Here was a tangible

link to the lost mint, a survivor of the 1878 fire—its back marked by soot and its surface worn by time. She listened as Susan King recounted the knocker's journey, from the local mint to New Orleans and back to Georgia. Anne knew this was no ordinary artifact—it was a piece of Dahlonega's soul.

In 2002, Anne penned an article, "Bronze Door Knocker from the Dahlonega Mint is Treasured by Singleton Descendants," published in the *GNA Journal's* Coin Show issue and on Al Adams' Gold Rush Gallery website. Her words brought the knocker's story to a wider audience, sparking interest among numismatists and historians. The Southern Gold Society celebrated the article at its 2002 meeting, with the journal's cover featuring a photograph of the knocker. Anne's work ensured the artifact's legacy was no longer confined to family lore.

The knocker's journey continued through the decades. In 2024, Susan King, now its caretaker, entrusted it to Bob Harwell, an Atlanta-based numismatist with a passion for Georgia gold. Harwell, who had met Susan by chance at a cocktail party years earlier, was tasked with finding the knocker a permanent home. By March 2025, that home was found: Susan donated the knocker to the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia. It now resides in the Hargrett Gallery, alongside an 1839 gold receipt and a period newspaper donated by Harwell. Notably, the knocker now appears without its original handle, which is no longer present. The small holes at the top of the wings, once thought to be for mounting, are more likely where the handle was originally attached. The knocker, once merely a functional object, is now a centerpiece of an exhibit celebrating the Dahlonega Mint's legacy.

Anne Amerson did not live to see the knocker's final chapter. She passed away in 2020, leaving behind a legacy as enduring as the artifact she reintroduced to the world. Her articles, books, and tireless advocacy for Dahlonega's history ensured that its stories would not fade. The brass door knocker, now displayed for all to see, is a testament to her love for her hometown and her knack for uncovering the extraordinary in the everyday.

And so, a humble knocker, touched by fire and time, found its way home, thanks to a woman who listened to the whispers of the past. Anne Amerson's story, like the knocker's, reminds us that history is not just in museums or books—it's in the hands of those who care enough to tell it.

This bronze door knocker, a cherished relic from the Dahlonega Mint, holds a special place in the hearts of Singleton descendants. A symbol of history and heritage, its story is beautifully told in Anne's article from the Gold Rush Gallery website. Courtesy of GoldRushGallery.com, used with permission.

Sources

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Postscript

While preparing this article, a friend and nationally recognized authority on the coinage and history of the Dahlonega Mint, Carl Lester, brought an important detail to my attention: the door knocker donated to the Hargrett Library is missing its knocker handle. Indeed, Anne Amerson's 2002 article, *"Bronze Door Knocker from the Dahlonega Mint is Treasured by Singleton Descendants"* (published in the *GNA Journal's* Coin Show issue and on Al Adams' Gold Rush Gallery website), includes a photograph of the knocker with its handle intact. By contrast, the photograph published in *Coin World's* July 6, 2024, article, *"Artifact from Dahlonega Mint Ready for New Home,"* shows the knocker without its handle. I intend to follow up on the fate of this missing piece—stay tuned!

Rare 1830 Templeton Reid Gold Coin Headlines Stack's Bowers Auction

The Southern Gold Society is pleased to share news of an extraordinary opportunity for collectors of Territorial gold coins. Stack's Bowers Galleries has announced the upcoming auctions of selections from the renowned James A. Stack, Sr. Collection, featuring 28 Territorial gold coins, many with provenances tracing back to numismatic auctions from the 1910s through the 1940s. This remarkable offering includes a standout piece: the 1830 Templeton Reid $2.50 gold piece, a rare and historic example of the first private coinage struck from native gold in the United States.

The 1830 Templeton Reid $2.50 gold piece, graded PCGS AU-58 CAC CMQ, is a cornerstone of this collection. Last seen publicly in Henry Chapman's 1924 sale of the Arthur Nygren Collection, this coin represents a pivotal moment in American numismatic history. Templeton Reid, a Georgia assayer, produced these coins during the early days of the Southern gold rush, making them a tangible link to the pioneering spirit of the era. Graded highly and certified by both CAC and CMQ, this piece is a must-see for collectors of Southern and Territorial gold.

Half of the Territorial coins in this offering hail from the collection of Hillyer Ryder, a numismatist better known for his work in colonial coinage but whose world-class assemblage of U.S. Federal and Territorial gold is equally impressive. These coins, unseen on the market for decades, offer a rare chance to acquire pieces with impeccable pedigrees and historical significance.

The James A. Stack, Sr. Collection, valued at over $20 million, is one of the most significant U.S. coin collections ever assembled. Stack's Territorial gold holdings, including the Templeton Reid piece, will be showcased in two upcoming auctions by Stack's Bowers Galleries, scheduled for December 2025 and February 2026 at their Griffin Studios in Costa Mesa, California. Highlights of the collection, including freshly graded coins by PCGS, will be revealed in the lead-up to the August 2025 American Numismatic Association's World's Fair of Money in Oklahoma City, where collectors can view a more complete display at the Stack's Bowers Galleries booth.

For Southern Gold Society members and Territorial gold enthusiasts, this auction represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to acquire rarities like the 1830 Templeton Reid $2.50 gold piece. Stay tuned for updates from Stack's Bowers Galleries via their e-blasts, social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok), and at www.stacksbowers.com.

Writers Needed

One of the purposes of the SGS is to "enjoy each member's knowledge." This newsletter is one of the ways this numismatic knowledge is dispersed. The frequency of the newsletter is driven by the number of submissions for publication. The editor of the SGS eNewsletter needs new material and welcomes the opportunity to review your original article for publication. Articles should be relevant to the study of the gold coins and related history of the

Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans branch mints and private minters Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers. If you do a presentation at a gathering or other venue, consider compiling your notes into an article. Do not worry about the grammar. The editor will do the rest. Electronic manuscripts should be submitted by email to contactus@southerngoldsociety.org.

Mission Statement

The Southern Gold Society was formed to increase the enjoyment and study of Southern gold coins and related history, through an informal, relaxed mix of education and fellowship. The society is reminiscent of those of a bygone era, in which connoisseurship and a gentlemanly appreciation of Southern gold coins is the order of the day.

Purpose

- To facilitate the enjoyment and study of the gold coins and related history of the Southern branch mints (Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans) and private Southern minters (Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers).
- To enjoy each member's knowledge and friendship in an informal manner.
- To provide a relaxed, pleasant environment in which to meet during selected coin shows and other convenient events.
- To encourage the appreciation and preservation of a Southern gold coin’s original surfaces.
- To consolidate the information, resources, and talent available to enthusiasts of these historic Southern gold coins.

Annual Membership Fees

Regular $25 (January-December).

Membership for new members joining in October, November, or December extends through the next year. Checks for membership fees should be made payable to the Southern Gold Society and mailed to David Crenshaw, P.O. Box 237, Dacula, GA 30019-0004.

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